

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: P.G. #68-63 Building Date: early 1890's
Building Name: G. A. Meyer House
Location: 4810 Ravenswood Road, Riverdale, Maryland

Private/Residence/Occupied/Good/Inaccessible

Description

The G.A. Meyer House is a two-and-one-half story frame house which stands on one of the original lots of the 1890's subdivision of Riverdale Park; it is roughly square in plan, with hip roof, but its lines are varied by a projecting front gable, entry porch and veranda. The principal south facade is dominated by a projecting gable front in the easterly bay, a full two-and-one-half stories high. The raking cornice of this gable is embellished with jigsawed bowed vergeboards with stencilled decoration. The main entrance to the house is immediately west of the projecting gable; just west of this door, in the first bay, is a small high single-sash window with colored border lights. Sheltering the entrance, and filling the southwest corner formed by the projecting gable, is a one-story shed-roof porch, with chamfered posts, and jig-sawn brackets with stencilled design. Sheltering the entire east elevation is a one-story hip-roof veranda, with plain cornice and plain square posts with plain balustrade railing and frieze. The house is sheathed with mustard-colored aluminum siding which covers the original German siding and the fish-scale shingles of the south gable. Windows are generally 2/2 double hung sash; the hip and gable roof is covered with green asphalt shingle and the overhanging eaves are highlighted at the corners by curved rafter ends.

Significance

The G.A. Meyer House is a good example of the late Victorian frame dwellings which were being built in the suburbs of Washington at the turn of this century. Basically Foursquare in plan, its lines are varied by a projecting front gable, entry porch and veranda. The Meyer House was built in the early 1890's by the Riverdale Park Company on Lot 13 of Block 22; it was one of the more modest dwellings in the late Victorian suburb of Riverdale Park. During the 1890's it was rented as a summer cottage by Gerhardt A. Meyer, a newspaper printer who lived in Washington, D.C.; in 1902, Meyer purchased the house and two lots, and it became his family's year-round home. During the Meyer family's residence, the east veranda and the rear wing were added; the enlarged house remained their home until 1918. Although some of the decorative detail has been covered by the present aluminum siding, the house does retain its original lines; it continues, as it has from the earliest days of the Riverdale Park suburb, to be a noticeable landmark in the community.

Acres: 18,000 square feet

Survey No. PG-63-63

Magi No.

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic The G. A. Meyer House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4810 Ravenswood Road not for publication

city, town Riverdale vicinity of congressional district 5

state Maryland county Prince George's

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u>X</u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture	<u> </u> museum
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial	<u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational	<u>X</u> private residence
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment	<u> </u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> </u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government	<u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<u> </u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial	<u> </u> transportation
	<u>X</u> not applicable	<u>X</u> no	<u> </u> military	<u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name William Shirk and Joanne Corcoran

street & number 4810 Ravenswood Road telephone no.:

city, town Riverdale state and zip code Maryland 20737

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prince George's County Courthouse liber # 5757

street & number 14735 Main Street folio 698

city, town Upper Marlboro state MD

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title none

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The G.A. Meyer House is a two-and-one-half story frame house which stands on one of the original lots of the 1890's subdivision of Riverdale Park; it is roughly square in plan, with hip roof, but its lines are varied by a projecting front gable, entry porch and veranda.

The principal south facade is dominated by a projecting gable front in the easterly bay. It is a full two-and-one-half stories high, and is lighted on first and second levels by two narrow 1/1 double hung sash windows, side by side; the loft level was originally lighted by a two-pane single sash window, now replaced by a louvered opening. The raking cornice of this projecting gable is embellished with jigsawn bowed verge-boards with stencilled decoration.

The main entrance to the house is immediately west of the projecting gable, in the second or central bay of the south facade. The panelled door has upper glazing, and has plain board surround with outer bead; above the door is a single-pane transom. Just west of this door, in the first bay, is a small high single-sash window with colored border lights, which lights the stairhall. Sheltering the entrance, and filling the southwest corner formed by the projecting gable, is a one-story shed-roof porch; the porch has chamfered posts with solid jig-sawn brackets with stencilled design. The porch is bounded by a plain balustrade railing, and accessible by a flight of concrete steps.

The west elevation is varied by a one-story semi-octagonal projecting bay in the first bay; it has a hip roof, and east of its three faces is lighted by a 2/2 double-hung-sash window. In the third (southmost) bay of the west elevation, a door at ground level leads into the stairhall, at a landing half way between first story and basement. This door is sheltered by a hip-roof canopy, support by plain stick-style brackets.

Sheltering the entire east elevation is a one-story hip-roof veranda; it has a plain cornice, supported by plain square posts with plain balustrade railing and frieze. The porch rests on concrete piers, and wraps around the north corner of the house, at which point it is accessible by a flight of steps to the north.

The house is sheathed with mustard-colored aluminum siding which covers the original German siding. Horizontal aluminum siding also covers (or replaces) the fish-scale shingles which originally ornamented the third level of the south gable. Windows are generally 2/2 double hung sash; they have plain board surrounds with outer bead, and black louvered aluminum shutters. The hip and gable roof is covered with green asphalt

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Description (continued)

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shingle; the deeply overhanging eaves are highlighted at the corners by curved jigsaw rafter ends. In the east plane of the hip there is a plain gable dormer (not original) with two modern windows. One modern brick chimney rises from the north plane of the hip roof; originally there was a tall corbelled brick chimney in the east plane of the roof, in the approximate location of the present dormer. The house rests on a high brick foundation, partly stuccoed and painted, which encloses a basement lighted by three-pane single sash windows.

Extending to the north, flush with the west elevation is a one-story wing, three bays by one, with a nearly flat roof. The wing rests on a concrete foundation, and appears to be an addition; it is shown in a circa 1904 photograph of the house which also shows the east veranda. Both wing and veranda were probably added at the same time. Entrance to the wing is in the east elevation, through a door from the wraparound veranda; the door has a single-pane transom.

There is a two-bay front-gabled garage located a short distance northwest of the house. The entrance bays are in the south gable front. The garage is covered with German wood siding painted the same mustard color as the aluminum siding of the house; trim is white, and the roof is covered with green asphalt shingle. There is a louvered hip-roof cupola at the south end of the ridge.

There is a low stone retaining wall inside the sidewall, and two maple trees in the grassy extension. West of the driveway which leads to the garage is a large catalpa tree. In the north (back) yard is a large in-ground swimming pool, with associated walks and patio area paved in brick. North of the swimming pool complex is a handsome fine holly tree.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input type="checkbox"/> social/
			<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (spec)

Specific dates	Builder/Architect
early 1890's	
check: Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D	
and/or	
Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local	

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The G.A. Meyer House is a good example of the late Victorian frame dwellings which were being built in the suburbs of Washington at the turn of this century. Basically Foursquare in plan, its lines are varied by a projecting front gable, entry porch and veranda; it has been, from the early years of the Riverdale Park suburb, a noticeable landmark in this community.

The land on which this suburb was built, had been part of the Riversdale plantation from 1801, when Henri Joseph Stier, a Belgian aristocrat, purchased approximately 800 acres north of Bladensburg, and had began to develop his plantation. After Stier's return to Belgium in 1803, completion of the Riversdale mansion and management of the plantation were taken over by his daughter and her husband, Rosalie and George Calvert. The Riversdale plantation became a model of its type, and remained in Calvert family possession for three generations.¹ After the death in 1864 of Charles Benedict Calvert (son of George and Rosalie Calvert), a commission was appointed to divide the plantation among his heirs; a 300-acre dower lot, including the mansion and the family burial ground to the northwest, was laid off for Calvert's widow.² This 300-acre dower lot (as well as the 175-acre lot adjoining it on the north) was sold in 1887 by the Calvert heirs to John Fox, president of the Riverdale Park Company, a New York real estate syndicate which then began development of the suburb of Riverdale Park.³ The land was platted in 1889 by surveyor D.J. Howell. Streets were laid out in a grid pattern, straddling the Washington line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which ran north and south through the new community, and offered to residents easy commuting into the Federal City. Park spaces, and circles of green were provided in the plan, and parkland was reserved around the Calvert mansion which was preserved "as a sacred relic of an era replete with historic memories."⁴ Streets were named for the Presidents of the United States, Washington through McKinley, as well as for other distinguished statesmen such as Clay, Lafayette and Beale.⁵

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Statement of Significance (continued)

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Construction of dwellings began in the 1890's. All were of frame construction, and reflected the popular taste of the period, as illustrated in the house plan catalogs of those years. Some were pyramidal-roof Foursquares, others front-gabled or cross-gabled; many were highlighted by projecting bays or corner towers, and many had prominent wraparound porches with jigsawn decorative detail. By the turn of the century, the new suburb had approximately 60 dwellings, a Presbyterian Church, a handsome Victorian schoolhouse and railroad station; the latter two public buildings were built by the Riverdale Park Company. There were several general stores, and telephone and telegraph communication was available. Concrete sidewalks were constructed, and sewers were provided for the principal streets.⁶ Because of its convenient location, its efficient line of transportation into the City, its primary school, and its picturesque tree-lined streets, Riverdale Park became one of the most desirable residential suburbs in the Washington area.

The G.A. Meyer House was built in the early 1890's by the Riverdale Park Company on Lot 13 of Block 22; with Lot 14 adjoining to the east, this modest but representative dwelling fronted on Adams Avenue at its corner with Columbia Avenue.⁷ During the 1890's the house was rented as a summer cottage by the family of Gerhardt A. Meyer, a printer for the Evening Star newspaper who lived in Washington during the winters. After spending about eight summers in Riverdale Park, Meyer purchased the house and two lots in 1902, and it became his family's year-round home.⁸

The subject house was one of the more modest dwellings in the late Victorian suburb of Riverdale Park: roughly square with hip roof, its lines were varied by a one-story semi-octagonal projecting bay on the side, and a full-height front gable which formed an inset corner for a small entry porch. Simpler than some of the other Riverdale houses, its only decorations were the bowed vergeboards and fishscale shingle siding of the front gable, and the perforated solid brackets of the porch posts.⁹ A photograph from circa 1894 shows an outbuilding just behind the house.

By the early years of this century, a one-story side veranda had been constructed along the east side of the house, offering a view of the garden lot (#14) which fronted on Columbia Avenue. This east veranda appears in the photograph of the Meyer House in the Riverdale Park real estate booklet, published by the Company circa 1904.¹⁰ The same photograph shows the one-story rear wing which was probably constructed at the same time.

First hand information about the young community of Riverdale Park is available through the diaries written by Meyer's son, William F. Meyer, and his neighbor and close friend, Harold Burrhus, during their teenage years.¹¹ (See also P.G. #68-64).

Harold Burrhus was skilled in electrical wiring, and he rigged a telegraph line between his house and the Meyers' house; diary entries by both boys during the first decade of this century record their frequent communications as well as glimpses of everyday life in the semi-rural suburb of Riverdale Park.¹²

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In 1918, the Meyers sold their Riverdale home; since that time, the house has passed through a series of short-term owners. In recent years, aluminum siding has been installed, covering the original German siding and the fishscale shingles in the front gable, as well as the wide window lintels. The house does, however, retain its original lines, and is noticeable for the original decorative detail of its entry porch and somewhat later veranda. It continues, as it has from the earliest days of the Riverdale Park suburb, to be a noticeable landmark in the community.

Notes

- 1 See Riversdale, Historic Structures Report, 1979, Part II, History (S.G. Pearl).
- 2 Prince George's County Equity #475.
- 3 Prince George's County Deeds JWB #8:426, 520; JWB #12:484; JWB #13:614.
- 4 Riverdale Park Real Estate booklet (undated), circa 1904.
- 5 Prince George's County Plat JWB #5:747, 688; Riverdale Park Real Estate booklet (undated) circa 1904.
- 6 Riverdale Park Real Estate booklet; "Riverdale Park" article, source unknown, ca. 1899.
- 7 Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1894-1902.
- 8 ibid; Prince George's County Deeds #9:500, 502; Riverdale Park booklet.
- 9 Photograph of the Meyer house, circa 1894; courtesy of Miss Helena Meyer, printed in Town of Riverdale, Maryland, 1920-1970, p. 27.
- 10 Riverdale Park Real Estate Booklet (undated), circa 1904.
- 11 See selections from the diaries, in Town of Riverdale, Maryland, 1920-1970, pp. 18-27.
- 12 ibid.

Survey No. PG-68-53

See Chain of Title

Quadrangle scale

state	code	county	code
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city or town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

PS-2746

R-55

68-63

68-64

410

0-5

R-18, R-10

R-55

0-5

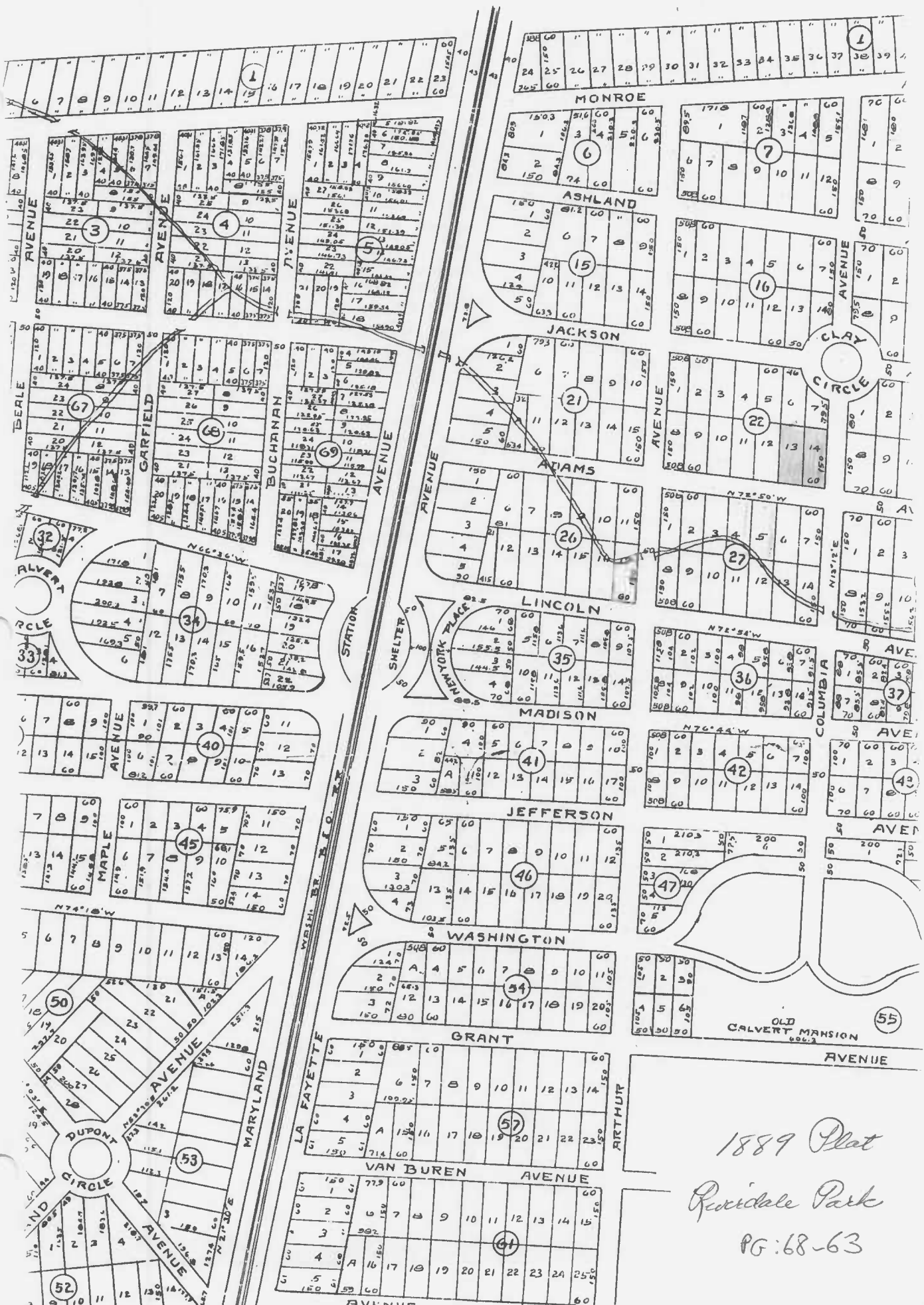
FLOOR CONTRA:

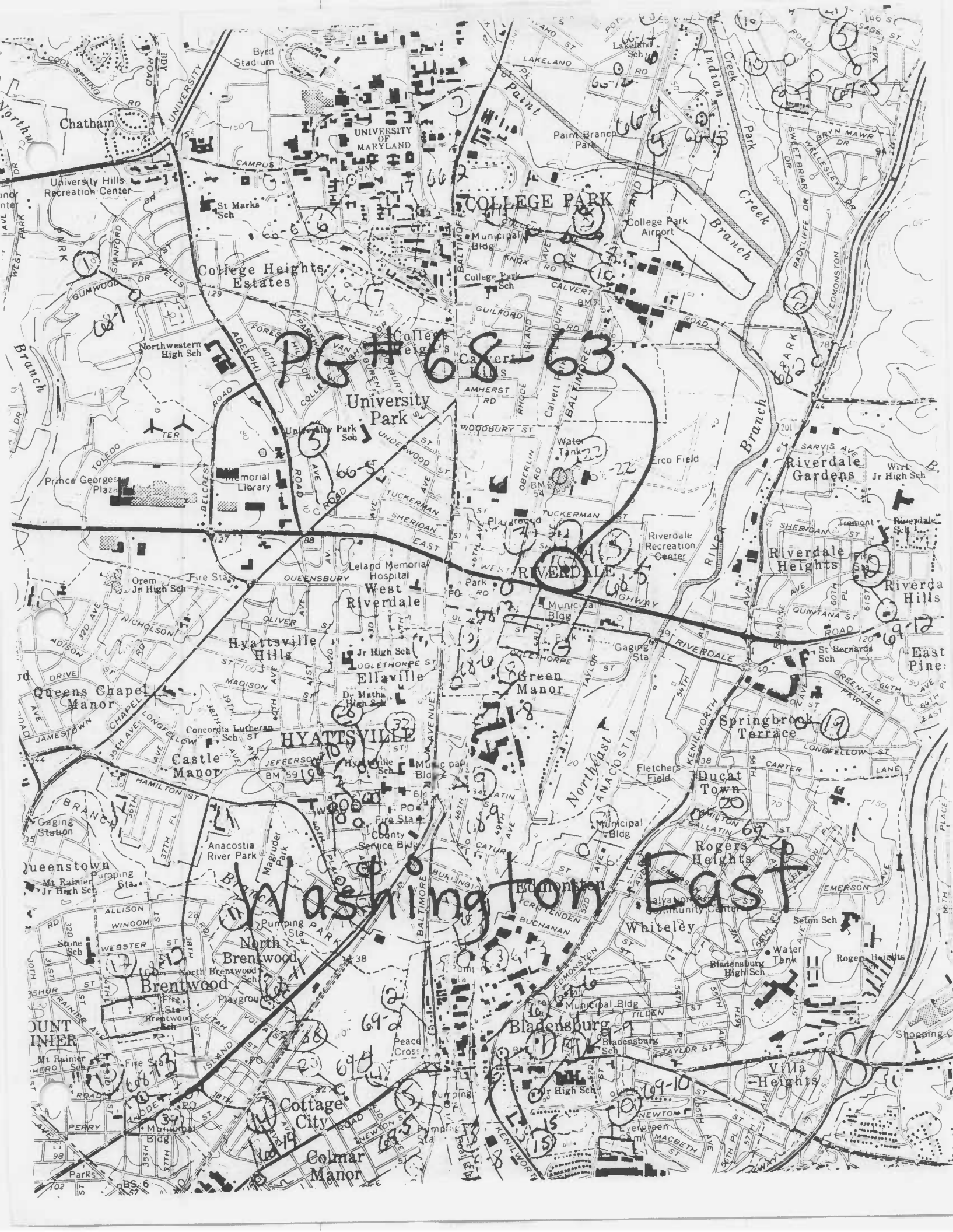
4. N. P. E. C.

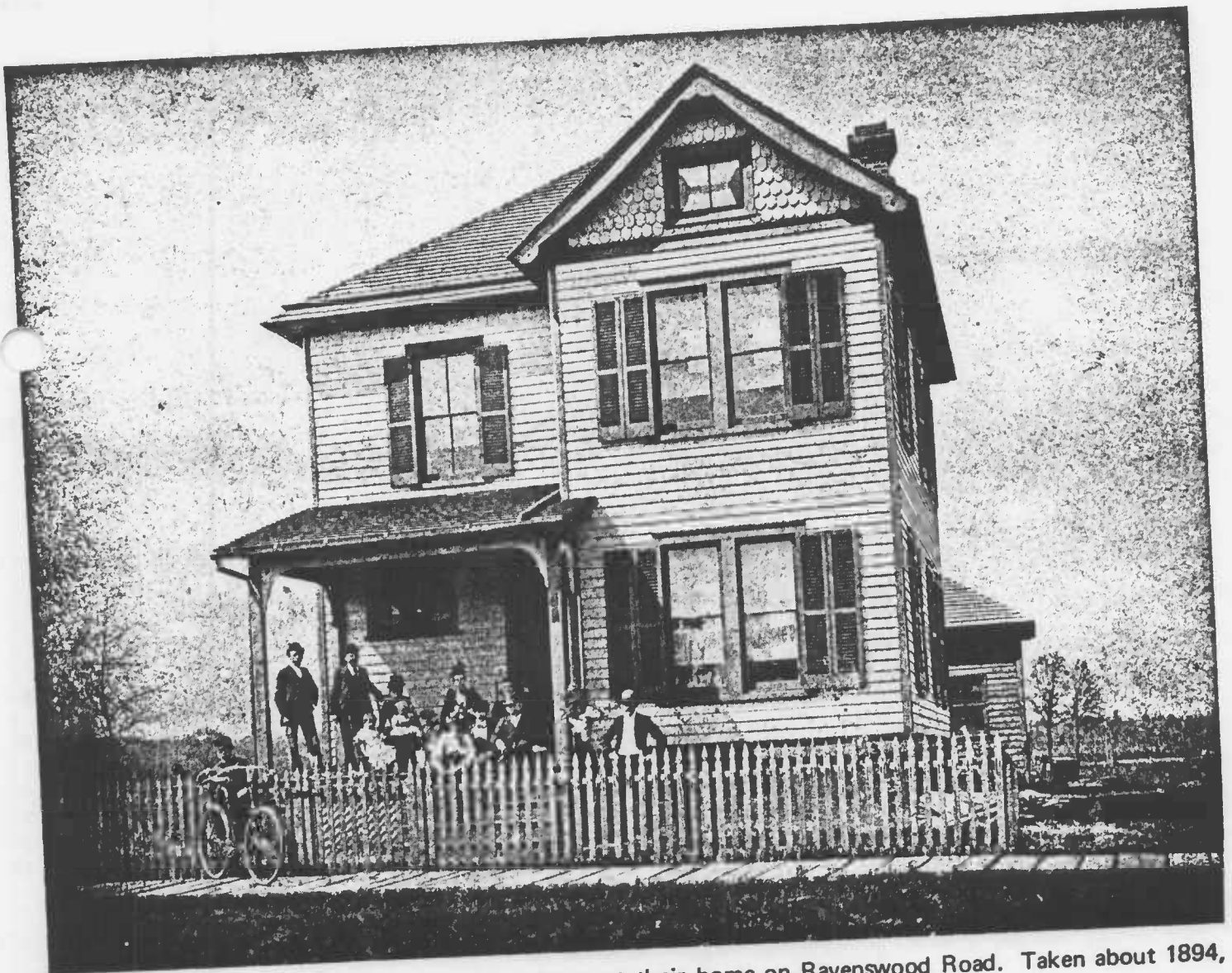
Surveyed
1889.

6 miles from Wash

SCALE 200

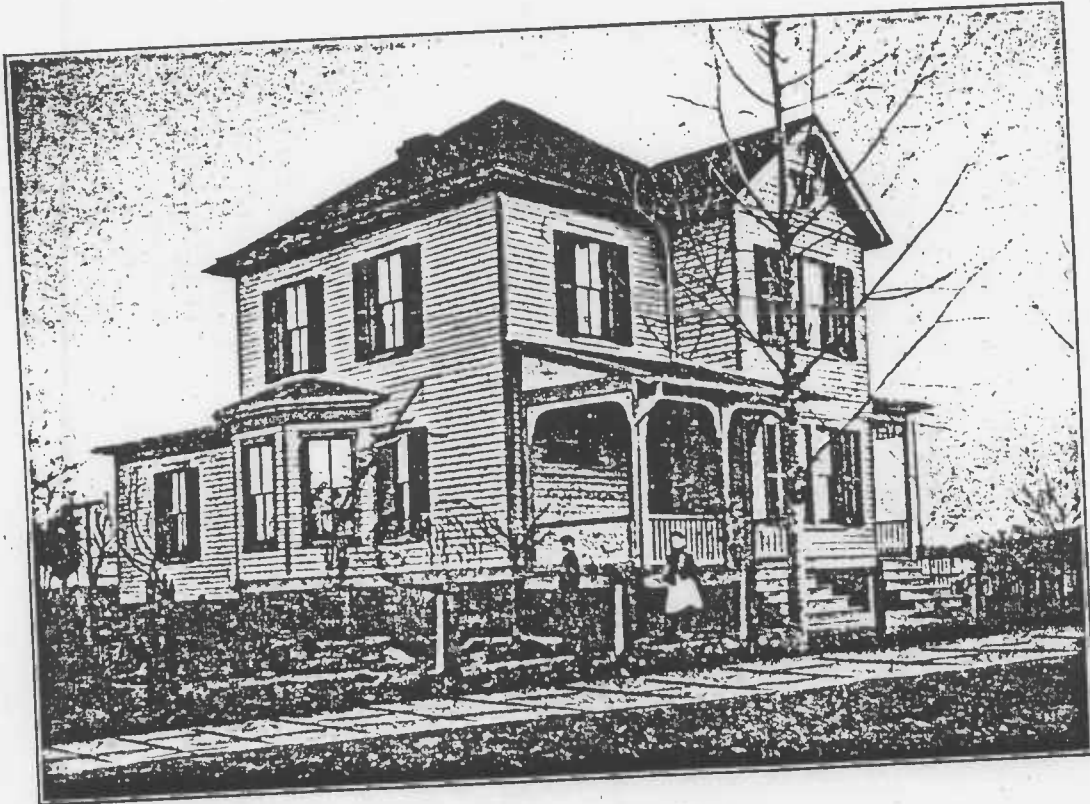






The Meyer family gathered for this group picture at their home on Ravenswood Road. Taken about 1894, it offers a glimpse of clothing fashions of the time. (Photo courtesy of Miss Helena Meyer)

RIVERDALE, MARYLAND



Residence of G. A. Myer.

From "Riverdale Park" brochure (undated), ca. 1904



Pls #68-63

Myrtle House

Prince George's Co Md.

Anna L. Barr

December 1988

Southeastern Education

1035 Md West Truss, Annapolis MD

1 of 4



PG #68-63

Myer, Horie

Prince George's Co. MD

Lucas St. Paul

December 1988

Lowest elevation

Hy. MD. Nat. Forest

Annapolis, Md.

2 of 4



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Meyer House

Prince George's Co., MD.

Lucas H. Pearl

December 1788

Northeast elevation

Neg: Alst. Hist. Trust,
Annapolis, MD.

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9
Pb # 68-63

Meyer House

Prince George's Co. MD.

Susan H. Pearl

December 1988

South Accotink

Near: MD. West Trust,
Annapolis, MD.

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